

Project Description

Description of problem as a usability problem

Aspire Higher is an app that will keep track of goals that people want to accomplish. It will be necessary to provide the user interface with features that will make goals seem more tangible, and in consequence, more attainable. By helping users plot a goal-centric trajectory, prompting them about deadlines, and managing goals on a calendar, the app will make it easier for people to achieve their goals. Instead of a “to-do” List, this app would prompt the user to plot out goals, the steps taken for the achievement, and document milestones.

Many of Aspire Higher’s functions would be most helpful on a mobile device. For instance, notifications about deadlines would need to happen in real time. Since Aspire Higher will be a mobile app, we need to be mindful about making things easier for mobile users, like having preset categories instead of asking for keyboard input.

Upon opening the app, the user would read over a splash screen indicating that the app would assist with creating a goal document. The app could run through a questionnaire template for the user, so that data entry could be reduced to multiple choice options. Keyboard entry could result in frustration and typos.

When the user creates a new goal, there would be a preset number of categories to choose from: Health/Work/School/Relationships/Personal Enrichment/Other. Each category would then have its own tree of categories. The Other category would allow the user to provide manual input via a keyboard in case the user’s goals do not correspond with any of the presets. The group can research the number of the most common goals people have to determine the most common presets

After users choose a general category for their goal, the app would encourage users to be specific about a goal.

From preliminary research¹, we found the most popular goal for 2018 was to “Eat Healthier.” Due to the non-specific nature of this goal, it would prove quite difficult for an individual to achieve this goal without the use of the Aspire Higher app. Through the preset categories of the app, this goal could be made more specific for the user and thus more attainable.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/chart/12386/the-most-common-new-years-resolutions-for-2018>

Let's take a look at how such an ill-defined goal can be made more clear and thus more attainable with preset categories which go from general to progressively more specific.

Below are the list of categories with an asterisk to represent the user choice in this scenario.

The user could select among the following categories:

*Health

Work

School

Relationships

Personal Enrichment

Other

Health:

- A. *Start a New Habit
- B. Quit a Bad Habit
- C. Achieve a Goal
- D. Other

Start a New Habit:

- A. Exercise More
- B. *Eat Healthier
- C. Meditate
- D. Other

Eat Healthier:

- A. Reduce Fast Food
- B. Eat More Fruit
- C. *Eat More Vegetables
- D. Other

Eat More Vegetables (enter amounts with keypad):

- A. What is your current intake of vegetables?: [0 servings/day]
- B. What do you want to increase the intake to?: [2 servings/day]

How long do you want to track this?

- A. One Week
- B. One Month
- C. *One Year
- D. Custom

As not all potential choices can be confined within these categories and it would be impossible to anticipate all possible user goals, the app would allow the possibility for customizable goals and categories.

Justification for why this is a good/interesting project

This project appears to be a great project from the standpoint of there being a number of variables to consider in finding the appropriate balance between user input and predetermined categories. The most common societal goals could be used as presets but it would be important to allow the user to have the freedom to enter their own unique goals. Determining the right balance will be an interesting question to answer.

Another interesting aspect of the project has to do with making specific steps for a goal. It will be a challenge to add or integrate these steps into a calendar, and make sure that notifications are appropriate and timely.

Finally, we find that there are a number of usability questions to consider, providing a reasonable amount of usability work and a significant amount of interest in answering those questions.

- **Effective to use (effectiveness)**

Defining an honest and unbiased standard of success, for example, will be a challenging task. Determining whether the application is actually doing a “good job” will require more than just our own personal experiences and opinions. We will also need to consider user feedback and the user’s experience in order to make an accurate determination as to whether the application is actually helping users reach their goals, and if not, consider what changes need to be made.

- **Efficient to use (efficiency)**

Once users have learned how to use the application, we will need to note how quickly they are able to perform tasks in order to maintain desirable levels of efficiency and productivity for the application. Our design must also allow users to sustain a high level of productivity, yet determining how to do so may not be so straightforward. There may be difficulty in determining a design that allows us to do just that, especially before user feedback.

- **Safe to use (safety)**

On the goal of safety, we must also carefully consider the user’s privacy, as we do not know how much personal information users will be comfortable sharing. We will need to define how much personal information is actually necessary in order for the application to be effective, while simultaneously providing reasonable justification to the user. We must also give thought to user error, their severity, and how easily users can recover from them as to retain efficiency and keep the user’s experience enjoyable.

- **Having good utility (utility)**

We have already considered and listed some of the most notable features this application will require, but throughout the design phase, we will also need to make sure those features are appropriate for the design and the tasks that the users need to complete. We may also find that additional features are required, or that some are not needed, based on user feedback.

- **Easy to learn (learnability)**

When users encounter our application for the first time, we will want to consider how easy it is for them to accomplish basic tasks and how long it takes before users are able to use the application effectively. We will need to determine how long users will be willing to spend learning our application and do our best to make sure that users are able to get started within

that period. Though we anticipate our target users will already have some familiarity with mobile applications, we understand that there is a possibility that our target audience could potentially be larger and perhaps tutorials may become necessary. There is also the consideration of users taking a non-traditional approach to learning how to use the application by simply exploring the interface and trying out certain features. We must consider how difficult it will be for users to learn the entire set of functions in this manner as well.

- **Easy to remember how to use (memorability)**

Though our application's goal is to assist users with obtaining their goals, we realize that there is the distinct possibility that users will not always succeed and may be away from the application for any extended period. In those instances, there is a significant amount of usability work the category of memorability. We have to consider how easily users will be able to re-establish proficiency when returning from a period of nonuse. Additionally, how often will users need reminders of how to perform tasks on the application itself? These points tie back into learnability. It will be important to implement a structure that not only facilitates not only ease of use, but also one that also facilitates reuse.

These are only some of the question we will be asking ourselves throughout the project and we anticipate a great deal more. However, we feel that asking comprehensive questions gives us the best opportunity to extract as much useful information as possible. We feel these considerations provide justification for an interesting project with a reasonable amount of usability work.

Description of target users

The target user of the app would be people who are attempting to balance their career, schoolwork, and/or personal life. Users will have more than one goal that they are actively pursuing, and a busy schedule that makes an app like Aspire Higher necessary. Users will be familiar with using mobile apps, and they carry their phone around enough so that they will be able to see notifications in real time. Specifically we would be looking at college students and recent college graduates. College and post-college are times of transition for many people, and this app will be designed to help those individuals build worthwhile goals for their future.

Potential users will you have access to

The group will have access to classmates, their family members, coworkers, and friends. We have talked to our social circles, and they are willing to be interviewed about the app. Since the app has a wide audience, and our social circles are also very different, we believe we have a good number and a good range of people to talk to.

Why we are the best team for this

We are a team composed of driven individuals and could actually see ourselves using this type of app. Goal setting is a skill that is often underdeveloped when students first reach college.

This application would enable students like ourselves to develop detailed plans and achieve our goals both in college and beyond.

We will finish the project on time because we have all committed to taking this class seriously, and we have been communicating and coordinating smoothly. The app will have many pages and options, but the scope is well within what we can accomplish this quarter.

“P” Predispositions

What do we know?

1. Utility (Usefulness)
 - a. Reminders are an easy way to hold users accountable to achieve their goals
 - i. Motivation is important, but research has shown that intentions are the driving force in achieving their goals. In a study, 91% of participants achieved their specific goals when they were reminded of their intentions.²
 - b. Weekly report cards are essential for goal tracking and evaluating the success of application
 - c. People are more likely to succeed in their goals if...³
 - i. Specific
 - ii. Measurable
 - iii. Attainable
 - iv. Written
 - d. When achieving a goal, it is important to make it a habit⁴
 - e. Creating cues that trigger an action will lead to success in goal achieving. These cues could be a time or location
2. Usability
 - a. Reduce the design for simplicity⁵
 - b. Align the design for neatness
 - c. Suggestions will improve learnability and efficiency of the application
 - d. Similar to breaking down tasks of a goal, breaking down parts of the UI into smaller containers makes it easier to use
 - e. Easy goal and reminder settings
 - i. Options for repeating reminders
 - ii. Goal recommendations
 - iii. Quick goal setting with fewer options

² https://www.huffpost.com/entry/achieve-your-goals-research-reveals-a-simple-trick-that-doubles-your-chances-for-success_b_8955318

³ https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_90.htm

⁴ <https://fs.blog/2017/06/habits-vs-goals/>

⁵ <https://simpleprogrammer.com/improve-ui-ux-application/>

What do we not know?

1. Goals:
 - a. How many goals do users usually want to keep track of?
 - b. Are some goals common for many users, or are there a huge variety of goals?
2. Goal Steps:
 - a. How many steps does an average goal have?
 - b. Are steps usually repeated or are they very different?
3. Notifications:
 - a. What is the minimum number of notifications needed to push a user to complete a step towards their goal?
4. Personal information:
 - a. How much personal information are users willing to give?
 - b. How much personal information is necessary for us to be effective at encouraging users to complete their goals?
5. Goal Report:
 - a. How can we tell if a user has been successfully completing their goals?
 - b. How can we tell if the goal report is motivating to users?
6. User Engagement:
 - a. Is there a way for us to design the app to be pleasurable to use? If it is tedious or has too many reminders, it may annoy the intended user.